



Family, Property, State

The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State

Karl Marx was a philosopher by training, and a writer all his life. But the only full work he ever wrote about philosophy was his doctoral thesis on the Ancient Greek philosopher, Epicurus, several years before the birth of Marxism.

Marx's working life was dedicated to the restoration of humanity to itself. This was the motivation for his greatest work, "Capital". Marx regarded the relation between men and women to be the essence of humanity. He never wrote a book about it, but in his papers at the time of his death in 1883 were the notes that his friend Engels quickly turned into "[The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State](#)". And this book turns out to be, not only original, but indispensable.

August Bebel's book "Woman and Socialism" came out five years earlier, in 1879, but it is not a satisfactory starting point. Engels' "Origin of the Family" on the other hand, has constant relevance. It describes women's place in society in the

complete context of the origin of property, class struggle, and the instrument that defends property and dominates class struggle: The State.

The special contribution of “The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State” is that it shows the common, interdependent origin of private property and the State; the fall of the women into the oppressive condition which they subsequently continued to suffer; and the institutions of money, writing and law. This original, revolutionary break marked the end of pre-history and the beginning of history, which as Marx and Engels had noted at the beginning of the Communist Manifesto of 1848, was from that time on “a history of class struggles”.

The transition from prehistoric communism took place a long time ago in some parts of the world. In Egypt and Mesopotamia (Iraq) it may have happened more than five thousand years ago. In most other parts it was a much more recent phenomenon, and in some places the fall of the women may in some ways still not yet be complete.

The simultaneous nature of the triple catastrophe (property, state and downfall of women) means that the remedy in all three matters will likewise have to be simultaneous, meaning also that:

The urgent abolition or “withering away” of the State is a woman’s issue. The socialist project is a woman’s project.

Communism is a necessity for women. The reversal of the downfall of the women can only be achieved by the simultaneous abolition of property and the State. Likewise, the abolition of property and the State cannot be achieved without the conscious restoration of women to their proper place in human society. All three goals have to be achieved together. The three goals are actually the same goal, and the name of it is communism.

This, the beginning of the course, therefore also provides the conclusion of the course: that there is no liberation available to working women under capitalism. Communism is where the contradictions will be resolved.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Engels, Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, C9, Barbarism and Civilisation](#).
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